

According to Dr. Yong Zhao, when it comes to technology integration in the classroom to address a particular problem, the problem has to be “mine.” One problem I have in my classroom that I would like to address is reading comprehension, more specifically reading comprehension when it comes to informational text in the subjects of Social Studies and Science. I have taught various grade levels and reading informational text has always been a struggle. However, this year it has been a HUGE struggle. The majority of the students in my school read below or significantly below grade level. I teach fifth grade and have a class of thirty wonderful students. Ten out of the thirty are Special Ed and have IEP’s. Twenty out of the thirty have failed at least one time. Obviously, I have many challenges. My students perform fairly well when it comes to reading narrative text. Narrative text is easier to read, can be read at a faster pace, and is more enjoyable to read. When it comes to Social Studies and Science, well, that is a completely different story. Often, I pair my students hi/low when we read from our Social Studies and/or Science texts. According to Brophy, pairs and small groups aide in student learning and achievement. I agree with Brophy, but I feel at times I am holding my higher level readers back by making them read with the lower level readers and I can tell they want to work independently sometimes. Also, my low level students have to be able to read independently because obviously, they won’t always have a partner in the real world. I don’t understand how some of my students have gotten this far lacking this critical skill and I can’t allow them to continue especially since they will be entering middle school next year. Reading informational text is crucial to success and can’t be ignored. In conversation with other upper elementary teachers in my building, they share my struggles. Our main question is, “What can we do to increase informational text reading comprehension that our students will be on board with?” For my project, I plan on incorporating Raz-Kids.com to aide in informational text reading comprehension.

The Reading Specialist in my building purchased a subscription to Raz-Kids.com this year. We have a ton of resources available to us, and many teachers haven’t utilized this website. When speaking with my Reading Specialist about my concerns regarding reading informational text, she strongly suggested that I take the time and try Raz-Kids.com with my students. Raz-Kids.com is a website that contains hundreds of animated books for reading practice. By using the site, students can improve their reading skills by listening for modeled fluency, read for practice, record their reading, and check comprehension with quizzes. They can listen to books read aloud, read with vocabulary and pronunciation support, or read without support. Students are motivated by “Raz Rocket” where they can earn stars for completed stories and quiz scores and gain ranks. The “Teacher Corner” tab has information on getting started, a video library, training resources, and summer materials.

I’ve sent out the parent letter provided by Raz-Kids.com home. There is an English version as well as a Spanish version, which is very convenient. Recently, I performed a Running Records reading assessment on each one of my students. I used this information to assign them stories on Raz-Kids. All students were assigned informational and narrative text stories. Each student was given their user name and password. They are to complete all of the stories assigned to them before they can move up to the next reading level. Students are given time twice a week

during laptop time and can utilize the five desktop computers in the room if they finish work early to go on Raz-Kids.com. I also plan to have Raz-Kids.com be a center sometimes when we have centers twice a week. Raz-Kids.com can be accessed anywhere with internet connection. I individually met with students to formulate a realistic goal of when they should be moving up to the next reading level. I plan to track their progress on Raz-Kids.com bi-weekly as well as give them short ten question informational text assessments from another resource I use, Study Island, to track progress. After this course, I plan to continue tracking their progress this way and at the end of the year, analyze the data as well as their Social Studies and Science grades. For summer practice, I plan to utilize the summer materials located under the “Teacher Corner” tab. In the teaching aspect, I am integrating this technology resource to strengthen reading skills for Social Studies and Science. In the learner aspect, the student is receiving added support in reading comprehension to apply to all subjects. This technology assists in all subjects, but I mainly want to focus on Social Studies and Science. Finally, this technology resource can be accessed in the classroom setting as well as any place with internet access.

I conducted an interview with our Writing Specialist Jill Larkins. She was introduced to [Raz-Kids.com](http://www.raz-kids.com) in the early 2000’s when she was doing her student teaching with Livonia Public Schools in Livonia, Michigan. When she was hired at our building, the website was one of the first things she suggested that my principal purchase for all grades and all teachers. Mrs. Larkins pulls out students from each class that are extremely below grade level in the subject of Reading. She stated that she has noticed an increase in enthusiasm with reading, as well as increased DRA levels, and various reading fluency/comprehension skills being used since Raz-Kids.com has been implemented. She regularly checks every teacher’s Raz-Kids account to document student achievement. The only students she hasn’t witnessed positives in related to Raz-Kids are those with severe reading disabilities. Raz-Kids.com has a phenomenal website. The website contains tabs for Books, Getting Started, and Teacher Corner. Under Teacher Corner, there are links for Video Library, Training, Summer Material, and Teacher Tips. It also goes into depth how Raz-Kids.com is linked with RtI. Everything is right there for you on the site and easy to navigate. Raz-Kids.com is a branch of [Learninga-z.com](http://www.readinga-z.com). Learninga-z.com is a main educational website with various branches including Readinga-z.com, which I use daily to accommodate the various read levels in my classroom, Sciencea-z.com, Reading-Tutors.com, Vocabualrya-z.com, and Writinga-z.com. Apparently, we also have a subscription to Writinga-z.com, but I currently do not utilize that resource. After spending much time on the *International Reading Association* site with my Reading Specialist, we could not find much on Raz-Kids.com other than the original site and a link to <http://www.readinga-z.com/research/index.html>. This site provided a tremendous amount of material on the aspects of Readinga-z.com, not so much Raz-Kids.com. On this site it had descriptions, findings, recommendations, citations, and alignment with research for phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, leveled reading, alphabet, preschool, and parental involvement as well as a paper titled “Providing Differentiated Instruction to Meet the Individual Needs of Students,” by Adria F. Klein. By searching Bing.com, I found a review of Raz-Kids.com as well as reviews of many other educational websites. On <http://brighthub.com/education/k-12/reviews/32285>, Raz-Kids.com received five stars out of five stars on the categories of Online Program, Collection, Cost, and Quality. It was also noted that the majority of people who utilize Raz-Kids.com also utilize a program called *Tumble-Books*, which is very similar. We just received a subscription to *Tumble-Books*. The article was dated February 2010. By searching on altavista.com, I came across some data pertaining to Raz-Kids. On www.quantcast.com/raz-kids.com, 89, 545 people

in the United States use Raz-Kids.com per month. The majority of those people are female and also use a program called *Starfall*. We used *Starfall* my first year at ABT Elementary, but are currently not at this time.

It was astounding how Raz-Kids.com is linked to so many other sites I use or have used in the past. I also learned that Raz-Kids.com is more of a branch-off of Learninga-z.com rather than its own website. There was an incredible amount of information on Learninga-z.com as opposed to just Raz-Kids.com, which was probably due to just that. Using Tumble-Books, Reading-a-z.com, and Writinga-z.com may help the implementation of Raz-kids.com since they are all related and similar.

Narrowing my TechQuest project to reading informational text, more specifically in the areas of Science and Social Studies may have been too narrow of a topic???. This may have hindered finding what I was looking for specifically. Next time, I will definitely allot myself more time for research and explore more online educational technology magazines and publications as well as dig deeper for teacher personal experiences.

Obviously, if I were to do another project of this type, I would like to implement it at the beginning of the school year. For this project, I considered the class as a whole, and as a whole, the class struggled with reading informational text. Next year, I would like to find individual student needs and find a way using technology to address them. I also, from the beginning, would keep a Raz-Kids folder to track individual student progress throughout the entire year to keep in their portfolios. The progress would count school usage as well as home usage.

Technology is not always dependable. We had major issues with our laptop carts this year. Also, even though some may think websites like Raz-Kids are basically student operated and they can be let go independently, they still need to be closely monitored. I had some students who liked to "fake read" and pick any answers they wanted on the quizzes. I also for next year, need to post and recognize high scorers, high achievers, and students who accessed the website at home often because everyone deserves praise and needs motivation!

I will for sure utilize Raz-Kids in my classroom for all students. They need all the help they can when it comes to reading comprehension and one way to improve on that is reading books at their level. As I mentioned before, I want to focus on individual student needs with some aspect of technology rather than just lumping the class together as a whole, keep progress folders in their portfolios, and publicly recognize individual student successes and achievement.